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SIPDIS

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STATE FOR AF/SPG, PRM, AND ALSO PASS USAID/W  
USAID FOR DCHA SUDAN TEAM, AFR/SP  
NAIROBI FOR USAID/DCHA/OFDA, USAID/REDSO, AND FAS  
GENEVA FOR NKYLOH  
NAIROBI FOR SFO  
NSC FOR PMARCHAM, MMAGAN, AND TSHORTLEY  
ADDIS ABABA FOR USAU  
USUN FOR TMALY  
BRUSSELS FOR PBROWN

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [EAID](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [SOCI](#) [KPKO](#) [UN](#) [AU](#) [SU](#)  
SUBJECT: SUDAN - S/E NATSIOS MEETS WITH NGOS

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¶1. Summary: On July 12, Special Envoy Andrew Natsios, accompanied by Charge d'Affaires Alberto Fernandez and others, met with the Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) Steering Committee in Khartoum to discuss issues facing the humanitarian community in Sudan. The NGOs noted that the Joint Communiqué has resulted in a reduction in processing time for Darfur entry visas and travel permits, but that staff working elsewhere in northern and eastern Sudan face growing bureaucratic impediments. NGOs also expressed alarm over insecurity in Darfur and concern over the U.N./African Union (AU) hybrid force, requesting that the international community emphasize that the role of any peacekeeping force is separate from that of humanitarian organizations. End Summary.

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View from the Ground  
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¶2. The NGOs began the meeting with a brief on northern Sudan. Tensions around oil fields had increased in advance of the July 9 deadline for Sudanese Armed Forces and Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) troop movements in accordance with the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), causing NGOs to reduce the number of staff working around these areas. NGOs expressed concern that growing field-level tension between the parties could lead to a rapid outbreak of localized conflict, as happened in Malakal, Southern Sudan, in November 2006. NGOs also reported that insecurity had reduced access to Southern Kordofan and Abyei. The lack of functioning governments in these areas hinders NGO efforts to begin long-term development programs.

¶3. The NGO representatives reported that carjackings have risen 150 percent since the signing of the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA), and kidnappings are on the rise in Darfur as well. NGOs believe that some assailants temporarily kidnap humanitarian staff in order to appear less suspicious and escape more quickly, assuming that no one will risk shooting at a vehicle transporting aid workers. Although no kidnappers have demanded ransom to date, S/E Natsios observed that it was only a matter of time before this tactic was used. The Zalingei area of West Darfur has been particularly unstable in recent months, with NGOs forced to rent cars to deter carjackings. Government police have just begun conducting more frequent patrols. It remains unknown whether this will help curb violence against

humanitarians in Zalingei.

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#### Joint Communique and Bureaucratic Impediments

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14. The Joint Communique has improved bureaucratic processes for NGOs operating in Darfur, although some procedures remain problematic. The NGOs requested that donor governments continue to ask questions about the progress of the communique. The High-Level Committee overseeing the communique has been an especially useful mechanism for addressing concerns, the NGOs reported. The committee expects to have a complete list of agreed-upon processing times for all procedures soon.

15. NGOs have observed that high-level Sudanese officials seem genuinely interested in cooperating to resolve issues, but working-level staff remain less helpful. Despite this, entry visas are generally being issued within 48 hours as agreed to in the communique. The government is taking less time to process travel permits, although it still surpasses the timeframe described in the communique. NGOs attributed this to the government's over-optimism regarding the bureaucracy's abilities rather than a concerted effort to hinder the travel of humanitarian staff. The NGOs reported that the government continues to deny many NGOs permission to bring in security officers, who are responsible for assessing local conditions and making decisions about where NGO staff can safely provide assistance. The government remains critical of any NGO reporting on security information, even in the context of staff safety.

16. Elsewhere in northern Sudan, bureaucratic impediments have increased, the NGOs reported. NGO staff must wait for months before receiving the necessary approvals to work in the Three Areas. The process for obtaining permission to work in eastern Sudan can take years.

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#### Not the Right Time for Development

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17. Although NGOs acknowledge that reconstruction and development are essential to sustainable peace in Darfur, all agree that the time is not right for full-scale development and reconstruction to begin. NGOs stressed the importance of sequencing reconstruction assistance appropriately; otherwise, assistance risks being a conflict dividend rather than a peace dividend. NGOs cautioned donors from starting reconstruction and development programs in areas that are relatively secure, because assistance may be rewarding people who are occupying the land of internally displaced persons (IDPs) who have fled the area.

18. NGOs also cautioned donors against giving in to the Sudanese government pressure to support returns, noting that this could lead to forced returns from IDP camps. NGOs stressed that conditions are not conducive for large-scale voluntary return, given continued insecurity. NGOs are working to improve assistance by taking environmental effects into account, strengthening capacity-building, and implementing limited livelihoods interventions to help people cope more effectively.

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#### Peacekeeping and the Peace Process

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19. The NGOs stated that the African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS) was generally useless in the face of increased militarization in IDP camps. Linking AMIS to the DPA had removed any credibility the force once had with IDPs, according to the NGOs. The NGOs believe that even the Darfur-Darfur Dialogue and Consultation (DDDC) is now tainted and seen as part of an AU effort that has been too partial to DPA signatories. With regard to working with the new AMIS force commander, S/E Natsios suggested that the NGOs might find it most effective to propose three or four realistic, immediate actions that

the new commander could take to demonstrate leadership to the IDP community.

¶10. The NGOs requested that any U.N. peacekeeping resolution include language describing the "crystal clear separation" of humanitarian work from peacekeeping work. The NGOs expressed concern that the proposed U.N. resolution contained language referencing the DPA, which could undermine the effectiveness of the hybrid force. In response, S/E Natsios stated that one of the key mandates of the hybrid force would be to implement a peace agreement, likely to be the DPA and an annex. NGOs accepted this, but stated that if the purpose of the hybrid force was publicized as implementing the DPA, the force would never be credible in the eyes of Darfurians.

¶11. S/E Natsios and the NGOs agreed that IDP leaders are asking for different things than opposition leaders. The NGOs stated that this was a sign that civil society must be included in the peace process. S/E Natsios noted that it was difficult to identify a small number of participants who could represent all of civil society in Darfur.

¶12. S/E Natsios shared his observation that the opposition groups had fragmented, and that while Abdul Wahid enjoyed popular support in the IDP camps, he had been uncooperative in efforts to begin negotiations. The NGOs then raised the issue of USG support for Minni Minawi, whose forces the humanitarian community accuses of the December 18 attack and rape of humanitarian staff in Gereida, South Darfur, in addition to numerous carjackings. S/E Natsios clarified that the USG had not provided any support for Minawi's forces to date, and that the Government of National Unity had provided minimal assistance to the group.

¶13. S/E Natsios did not have the opportunity to clear this message.

FERNANDEZ